

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 058

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL PALERMO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USNATO

DIA

SHAPEUSNMR

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

USDOCOSOUTH

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN GOVERNMENT CRISIS -RROUNDUP

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THE TRADITIONAL ROUND OF POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS,
PRESIDENT LEONE ON JANUARY 19 ASKED, AS EXPECTED, GIULIO ANDREOTTI
TO TRY TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. ANDREOTTI EXPECTS TO BEGIN

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DISCUSSIONS WITH POLITICAL LEADERS OF THE VARIOUS PARTIES ON
JANUARY 23 USING AS THE BASIS OF HIS TALKS THE CONTINUATION OF THE
ABSTENTION-GOVERNMENT FORMULA. THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) ARE
KEEPING UP THE POLITICAL PRESSURE BY REPEATING THEIR DEMAND
FOR THE FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL
EMERGENCY AND BY HINTING THAT THEY MIGHT BE AGREEABLE TO
WORKING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNING MAJORITY WITHOUT

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC). THE LAY PARTIES ARE ESSENTIALLY REPEATING

THEIR POSITIONS WITH THE SOCIALISTS NEARING THE END OF A CENTRAL COMMITTEE

MEETING AT WHICH IT NOW APPEARS LIKELY THAT THEY WILL DECIDE TO CONVENE A PARTY CONGRESS IN LATE MARCH. END SUMMARY.

1. AS EXPECTED, PRESIDENT LEONE ENDED THREE DAYS OF FORMAL CONSULTA-

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WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON JANUARY 19 BY ASKING GIULIO ANDREOTTI TO TRY TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. IN A BRIEF STATEMENT, ANDREOTTI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HIS TASK WILL BE DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF THE WIDE DIFF

ERENCES BETWEEN THE PARTIES. HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED HE COULD COUNT ON THE "

SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND COOPERATION" THAT HAD PREVAILED BETWEEN THE PARTIES OVER THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE A SOLUTION" IN WHICH NO (PARTY) WILL LOSE ITS IDENTITY OR HAVE TO RENOUNCE ITS LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES."

2. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT DIRECTORATE MET ON JANUARY 20 TO PROVIDE ANDREOTTI WITH THE PARTY'S GUIDELINES ON HOW THE CRISIS MAY BE RESOLVED. ANDREOTTI SAID HE WILL USE THE WEEKEND TO PREPARE FOR HIS FIRST FORMAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE PARTIES ON MONDAY, JANUARY 23. THE CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER IS EXPECTED TO INITIATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISCUSSIONS ON THE BASIS OF A CONTINUATION OF THE ABSTENTION-GOVERNMENT FORMULA. DURING THE PAST WEEK, DC LEADERS HAVE REITERATED THE PARTY'S OFFICIAL POSITION THAT A SOLUTION SHOULD AND CAN BE FOUND IN UPDATING AND BROADENING LAST JULY' SIX-PARTY PROGRDAOACCORD. ACCORDING TO DC SOURCES, SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD ENABLE THE PCI TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF AGREED-UPON POINTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM (THUS MAKING THE PCI CO-RESPONSIBLE FOR SPECIFIC LEGISLATION), BUT WOULD STOP SHORT OF PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY.

3. ALTHOUGH THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO BE PROTRACTED, THEY OPEN IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF DECIDED PESSIMISM. WHEREAS MANY OF OUR

SOURCES HAD PREVIOUSLY INDICATED A 50 PERCENT CHANCE OR BETTER THAT A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION WILL BE ACHIEVED, MANY ARE NOW TELLING US THAT THE INCREASING RIGIDITY IN THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES MAKES RECOURSE TO NEW LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, HOWEVER UNWANTED, MUCH MORE LIKELY. POLITICAL LEADERS ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN STUNNED BY THE RESULTS OF A PANORAMA MAGAZINE POLL WHICH REVEALED THE DEPTH OF HARDLINE SENTIMENT AMONG DC PARLIAMENTARIANS AGAINST ANY SOLTUION WHICH WOULD BRING THE PCI INTO THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. OF 205 OUT OF 263 DC DEPUTIES POLLED (MEMBERS OF THE

GOVERNMENT WERE NOT ASKED), ONLY 38 OR 18.5 PER CENT SAID THEY WERE FAVORABLE TO THE PCI IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY; 64.5 PER CENT WERE OPPOSED; THE REMAINING 17 PER CENT WERE UNCERTAIN. PANORAMA NOTED THAT THE RESISTANCE TO THE PCI WAS GREATER IN THE NORTH (ALL 16 DC PIEDMONT DEPUTIES INTERVIEWED WERE OPPOSED) WHEREAS THE SMALL GROUP IN FAVOR WERE MOSTLY FROM THE SOUTH.

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4. DURING THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THEIR JANUARY 26 CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING (AT WHICH PARTY SECRETARY BERLNGUER IS EXPECTED TO PRESENT THE OPENING STATEMENT), THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WITH A VIEW TO WEARING DOWN THEIR OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST DEMANDS FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE COMMUNISTS WILL PURSUE THEIR EFFORTS TO ATTEMPT TO PIN THE BLAME FOR THE CURRENT CRISIS ON ONE OF THE OTHER POLITICAL FORCES.

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5. THE PAST WEEK HAS SEEN THE PCI REITERATING ITS PROPOSAL FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY TO RESOLVE THE NATION'S PRESSING PROBLEMS. THE PARTY OFFICIALLY RESTATED THIS POSITION TWICE DURING THE WEEK, ONCE IN A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED JANUARY 17, AT THE CONCLUSION OF A MEETING OF REGIONAL SECRETARIES OF THE PARTY AND A SECOND TIME IN A STATEMENT READ BY PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER ON JANUARY 18 AS HE EXITED FROM THE QUIRINALE FOLLOWING CONSULTATIONS WITH ITALIAN PRESIDENT LEONE.

6. THE PCI DID CAUSE A MAJOR STIR DURING THE WEEK WHEN, IN THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE MEETING OF REGIONAL SECRETARIES, THE COMMUNISTS HINTED THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY, THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE FORMATION OF A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT (COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS) WITHOUT THE DC. THE PCI PRESS SECTION FOLLOWED UP ON THE COMMUNIQUE WITH THE RELEASE OF STATISTICS INDICATING THAT THE FOUR ABOVE-MENTIONED PARTIES HAD GARNERED JUST OVER 50 PER CENT OF THE VOTES IN LAST YEAR'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS. BERLINGUER, IN HIS PREPARED STATEMENT A DAY LATER, ATTEMPTED TO PLAY DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PREVIOUS DAY'S STATEMENT, BUT HE NEVERTHELESS REMINDED EVERYONE THAT "IN THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT THERE EXIST DIVERSE POSSIBILITIES TO AN OUTCOME (EARLY ELECTIONS) THAT ALL THE POLITICAL FORCES CONSIDER GRAVE AND NEGATIVE."

COMMENT: AT THIS POINT WE DO NOT SEE THE PCI HINT ABOUT A POSSIBLE MAJORITY WITHOUT THE DC AS ANYTHING MORE THAN A TACTICAL MANEUVER DESIGNED TO INCREASE THE PRESSURE ON THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS

TO MAKE SOME CONCESSIONS TO THE LEFT. AT THE VERY LEAST, THE IDEA WOULD SEEMINGLY HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING SINCE THE REPUBLICANS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IMMEDIATELY REJECTED IT, PERHAPS CONTRIBUTING TO BERLINGUER'S EFFORTS TO DEFLECT ATTENTION FROM THE

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PROPOSAL. FURTHERMORE, FOR THE PCI TO MOVE FORMALLY TO SUCH A POSITION WOULD MEAN A NEGATION OF THE CURRENT LINE OF THE PARTY. FOR THE MOMENT, WE WOULD EXPECT THE PCI TO CONTINUE ITS CALL FOR A GOVERN-

MENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY, AND DO NOT EXPECT IT TO PLAY ANY MORE OF ITS

CARDS UNTIL IT RECEIVES NEW SIGNALS FROM THE DC. NEVERTHELESS,
THE RECENT PCI STATEMENTS REFLECT THE DEPTH OF THE
DILEMMA IN WHICH THE PARTY FINDS ITSELF AT THIS DIFFICULT CROSSROAD,
AND IT CANNOT BE TOTALLY RULED OUT THAT THE PARTY WOULD EMBARK
ON A NEW STRATEGIC COURSE IF CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRED.
END COMMENT.

7. AMONG THE SOCIALISTS AND LAY PARTIES, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT OF THE WEEK IS THE ON-GOING PSI CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING WHICH BEGAN ON JANUARY 19. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, IT APPEARS THAT CRAXI AND SIGNORILE MAY HAVE MARSHALLED SUFFICIENT VOTES TO BEAT BACK AN ATTEMPT BY MANCA AND MANCINI TO POSTPONE THE PSI'S MARCH CONGRESS. SINCE CRAXI IS EXPECTED TO BENEFIT AT THE CONGRESS FROM STRONG LOCAL LEVEL SUPPORT, HOLDING THE CONGRESS ON SCHEDULED IS REGARDED AS HIGHLY IMPORTANT FOR CRAXI'S SURVIVAL AS PARTY SECRETARY. THE PSI CC MEETING MAY ALSO CLARIFY THE SOCIALIST ATTITUDE ON THE CRISIS. SO FAR, THEY CONTINUE TO PROFESS SUPPORT FOR AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, PSI LEADERS HAVE BEEN OUTSPOKEN ON THE NEED TO AVOID NEW ELECTIONS (CRAXI CALLED THEM "WORSE THAN CHOLERA"). THE REPUBLICANS HAVE INDICATED THAT ANYTHING THAT BRINGS THE PCI FURTHER IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS WILL BE SALUTARY BUT STRESS THAT THE KEY TO RESOLUTION OF THE CRISIS IS AGREEMENT ON AN EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC PROGRAM. THE LIBERALS SUPPORT THE DC'S LINE; THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AGREE THAT THE PCI SHOULD NOT ENTER THE GOVERNMENT, BUT DIFFER IN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT A FORMULA IN WHICH THE PCI WOULD JOIN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. GARDNER

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